

DATE ISSUED: October 23, 2003

EPORT NO: 03-216

ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
Agenda of October 29, 2003

SUBJECT: Fire-Rescue Department Reorganization Update

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

BACKGROUND

In FY 2003, under the direction of Fire Chief Jeff Bowman, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department underwent a thorough review and assessment of the Department. This led to a comprehensive reorganization effort that was approved for implementation by the City Council. Council requested the Department return to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee, in FY 2004, to provide a status report on this reorganization effort and an analysis of the final outcome.

INTRODUCTION

As the FY 2003 reorganization process evolved, there were many modifications to the numbers and classifications of positions. Numerous classification studies were conducted in conjunction with the Personnel Department. This entire reorganization effort had a phased implementation to realize the cost savings of reducing positions prior to filling the new classified or unclassified positions to avoid an impact to an already delicate budget situation. Initially, the proposal had to include estimated costs for new classifications and unclassified positions. These factors meant that the bottom line

impact of the reorganization effort was constantly changing and the final impact could not be determined until after final FY 2004 personnel figures were available.

DISCUSSION

The Fire-Rescue reorganization process ultimately identified twenty-six positional changes within the Department. Attachment I is a summary of the final reorganization plan as actually budgeted. This summary includes only the positions impacted by the implemented reorganization plan. The final page shows net department-wide savings of \$230,330. However, this total does not include the two Clerical Assistant II positions that were not included to help balance the City's FY 2004 proposed budget. Had these two positions been included the net savings would have been \$141,178. This is in comparison to the original estimated savings of \$30,000. The difference is due to differences between preliminary cost assumptions and final costs based on salaries for new positions.

In the implemented changes there was a total increase of 5.09 positions. However, most of these are not funded by the General Fund: 1.68 positions are funded by the San Diego Medical Services Enterprise Partnership, 0.33 funded by Rural/Metro, and 2.40 positions are grant funded. This yields a net General Fund increase of 0.68 positions.

Another analysis was conducted on the summary of savings from the civilianization portion of the reorganization proposal. Attachment II isolates just those actions related to the civilianization effort. Based on this analysis the net savings was \$227,586.

Below are listed a few of the significant changes that have been implemented.

- **Establishment of Two Assistant Fire Chiefs**

Appointing two Assistant Fire Chiefs to oversee daily operational management and administration of all department functions has resulted in an overall improvement in productivity, accountability, and morale throughout the department. Program and fiscal management have dramatically improved through a series of administrative checks and balances established by the Assistant Fire Chiefs.

- **Hiring of Professional Civilian Managers**

Chief Fire Officers typically rotated through the following positions every two to three years: Human Resources Manager, Communications Manager, Fleet Manager, Building Maintenance Supervisor, Project Officer I, and Public Information Officer. Under the reorganization effort, professional civilian managers were hired to fill these positions expanding the career opportunities for civilian staff and providing them the opportunity to apply their education and professional experience to benefit the Department.

- **Civilianization of the Fire Communications Center**

On September 26, 2003, the last uniformed person was reassigned to Operations and the civilian workforce assumed complete oversight of the Fire and Emergency Medical Services 911 Communications/Dispatch Center. This change should lead to consistent leadership and management in key positions historically filled with uniform personnel who rotated every two to three years. This rotation often resulted in a loss of historical knowledge and continuity in management for this division.

- **Creation of the Special Operations and Services Division**

This Division was created to provide consistent supervision and guidance to the specialty units that have developed within our Department, and to provide dedicated staff for emergency management and disaster preparedness. Special Operations oversees the Urban Search & Rescue Team, Hazardous Materials Team, Helicopter Program, Metro Arson Strike Team, Special Trauma and Rescue Program, Explosive Device Team, and Metropolitan Medical Strike Team, as well as the Homeland Security areas of the Department. In addition, this division is responsible for special projects such as Strategic Planning, Fire Accreditation, and the application and processing of grants.

Grant opportunities in the area of public safety have increased considerably since the 9-11 tragedy. The critical role of the first responder as it relates to homeland security appears to have achieved recognition at the federal level. Attached is a spreadsheet of active grants (Attachment III). These grants have provided the funding to upgrade the City's Urban Search and Rescue Team to Weapons of Mass Destruction-capable, and fulfill some of the equipment needs for emergency response personnel. Additional funding is on the horizon allocated for training, exercising and planning.

Through grant funding and the Joint Powers Agreement for the Hazardous Materials Team, Special Operations has been able to expand beyond the original scope of the reorganization effort through additional funded positions (two Battalion Chiefs, one Administrative Aide, and one Clerical Assistant II).

- **Centralization of Fire Operation Division Management**

Fire Operations was restructured from four operations Deputy Chiefs to one Deputy Chief and two Division Chiefs. This change has provided a more consistent and efficient management of the twenty one operational Battalion Chiefs. Roles, responsibilities and assignment tracking have been developed and implemented to improve productivity and accountability of operational personnel.

- Additional support personnel may be required in this area to improve efficiency.
Creation of the Outreach, Recruitment and Community Education Section

As part of the reorganization, the focus of the Community Education section has expanded to better meet the Department's needs in outreach, recruitment and community education. Two personnel are now dedicated to outreach and recruitment where previously there has been no dedicated staff for this critical function.

- **Expansion of the Training Division**

With the civilianization of the Communications Center, several captains positions were reassigned to the Training Division to better address the multitude of training needs required by a large metropolitan fire department. This division is still considered critically under staffed to meet the department's ever growing training requirements.

- **Integration of the Lifeguard Division**

Over the past year, administrative staff began to consolidate and centralize services where duplication of effort existed. Facilities maintenance, fleet management, health & human resources and information systems support are areas where consolidation is occurring. Financial services and payroll have been centralized to leverage efficiencies within the department. Progress and effort has occurred on both sides to integrate where practical yet respect each others expertise and specialization of service delivery where appropriate.

- **Implementation of 12 Hour Shift Schedule for Fire/EMS Dispatchers**

One area currently under evaluation through a six month pilot program, and not included in the reorganization net savings, is the proposal to move the dispatchers to a twelve hour shift schedule. The goal of this change is to provide dispatchers a more concentrated rest period, reduce the number of unscheduled absences, and for the first time guarantee every other weekend off. This schedule will also provide efficiency in staffing levels to match the incoming call volume.

CONCLUSIONS

The magnitude of changes required to implement this reorganization proposal required a collaborative effort between key stakeholders, including several city departments; i.e., Personnel, Human Resources, Fire-Rescue, and all three labor organizations. Without open communication and working side by side over the past year, this level of

organizational change would never have been successful. Everyone's efforts are to be commended! The realization of \$230,300 in savings through leveraging efficiencies and reorganizing at all levels of the organization provides a model for other departments to follow.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Bowman
Fire Chief

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Assistant City Manager

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Note: The attachments are not available in electronic format. A copy is available for review in the Office of the City Clerk.

Attachments: I. Reorganization Position Cost Summary
II. Savings from Civilianization Portion of Reorganization Program
III. SDFD Grant Tracker